

5.04: AUTOMATIC LICENSE PLATE READER**In Effect: 06/26/2011****Review Date: 06/26/2012 @ 0800**

Automatic License Plate Reader

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| PITTSFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE NO. 5.04 | ISSUE DATE: 19 June 2011 |
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I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The purpose of this policy is to provide officers with guidelines on the proper use of automatic license plate recognition (ALPR) systems, also commonly known as license plate reader systems.

II. POLICY

The availability and use of ALPR systems have provided many opportunities for the enhancement of productivity, effectiveness, and officer safety. It is the policy of this agency that all members abide by the guidelines set forth herein when using ALPR systems.

III. ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

FOUO: For Official Use Only

ALPR: Automatic License Plate Recognition/License Plate Reader

OCR: Optical Character Recognition

Read: Digital images of license plates and vehicles and associated metadata (e.g., date, time, and geographic coordinates associated with the vehicle image capture) that are captured by the ALPR system.

Alert: A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the ALPR system receives a potential “hit” on a license plate.

Hit: A read matched to a plate that has previously been registered on an agency’s “hot list” of vehicle plates related to stolen vehicles, wanted vehicles, or other factors supporting investigation, or which has been manually registered by a user for further investigation.

Hot list: License plate numbers of stolen cars, vehicles owned by persons of interest, and vehicles associated with AMBER Alerts that are regularly added to “hot sheets” circulated among law enforcement agencies. Hot list information can come from a variety of sources, including stolen vehicle information from the National Insurance Crime Bureau and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), as well as national AMBER Alerts and Department of Homeland Security watch lists. Departments of motor vehicles can provide lists of expired registration tags, and law enforcement agencies can interface their own, locally compiled hot lists to the ALPR system. These lists serve an officer safety function as well as an investigatory purpose. In addition to agency supported hot lists, users may also manually add license plate numbers to hot lists in order to be alerted if and when a vehicle license plate of interest is “read” by the ALPR system.

Fixed ALPR system: ALPR cameras that are permanently affixed to a structure, such as a pole, a traffic barrier, or a bridge.

Mobile ALPR system: ALPR cameras that are affixed, either permanently (hardwired) or temporarily (e.g., magnet-mounted), to a law enforcement vehicle for mobile deployment.

Portable ALPR system: ALPR cameras that are transportable and can be moved and deployed in a variety of venues as needed, such as a traffic barrel or speed radar sign.

IV. POLICY GUIDELINES

A. General

1. The use of ALPR systems is restricted to public safety-related missions of this agency.
2. ALPR systems and associated equipment and databases are authorized for official public safety purposes. Misuse of the equipment and associated databases, or data, shall be subject to sanctions and/or disciplinary actions.
3. ALPR systems and ALPR data and associated media are the property of this agency and intended for use in conducting official business with limited exceptions noted elsewhere in this policy.

B. Administration

1. The agency has designated the traffic unit supervisor as the employee with administrative oversight for ALPR system deployment and operations. The traffic unit supervisor is responsible for the following:
 - a. Establishing protocols for access, collection, storage, and retention of ALPR data and associated media files.
 - b. Establishing protocols to preserve and document ALPR reads and “alerts” or “hits” that are acted on in the field or associated with investigations or prosecutions.
 - c. Establishing protocols to establish and ensure the security and integrity of data captured, stored and/or retained by the ALPR system.
 - d. Ensuring the proper selection of the personnel approved to operate the ALPR system and maintaining an adequate number of trainees.
 - e. Maintaining records identifying approved ALPR deployments and documenting their results, including appropriate documentation of significant incidents and arrests that are related to ALPR usage.
 - f. Authorizing any requests for ALPR systems use or data access according to the policies and guidelines of this agency.
2. Designated, trained personnel shall check equipment on a regular basis to ensure functionality and camera alignment. Any equipment that falls outside expected functionality shall be removed from service until deficiencies have been corrected.
3. ALPR systems repairs to hardware or software shall only be made by agency authorized sources. Department personnel shall not alter or modify the equipment in any way, without authorization of the traffic unit supervisor.

C. License Plate Reader System Usage

1. ALPR operation and access to ALPR collected data shall be for official agency purposes only.
2. Only officers who have been properly trained in the use and operational protocols of the ALPR systems shall be permitted to use it.
3. At the start of each shift users must ensure that the ALPR system has been

updated with the most current hot lists available.

4. ALPR Alerts/Hits: Prior to initiation of the stop:
 - a. Visually verify that the vehicle plate number matches the plate number run by the ALPR system, including both the alphanumeric characters of the license plate and the state of issuance.
 - b. Verify the current status of the plate through dispatch or MDT query when circumstances allow.
5. In each case in which an alert or hit is triggered, the user should record the disposition of the alert into the ALPR system.
6. Hot lists may be updated manually if the user enters the specific plate into the ALPR system and wants to be alerted when that plate is located. Whenever a plate is manually entered into the ALPR system, the officer should document the reason and include a OF# if possible.
7. Special Details: ALPR use during nontraditional deployments (e.g., special operations or during criminal investigations) must be approved by the administrator or a member of the Command Staff.
8. Searches of historical data within the ALPR system should be done in accordance with established departmental policies and procedures.

D. ALPR Data Sharing and Dissemination

ALPR data should be considered FOUO and can only be shared for legitimate law enforcement purposes:

1. When ALPR data are disseminated outside the agency, it is to be reported to the system administrator and documented in a secondary dissemination log.
2. Information sharing among agencies should be dictated in accordance with MOU's (memoranda of understanding) or established departmental policies.

E. Retention

The collection and retention of ALPR data raises several citizen privacy concerns.

1. Theoretically, ALPR data could be used to monitor the travel patterns, and whereabouts of individuals as they go about their daily lives. ALPR systems could also theoretically be used to record vehicle attendance at sensitive locations or

events (i.e. Political rallies, healthcare sites).

2. As stated above, this agency prohibits ALPR usage except in furtherance of its public safety mission. Accordingly, any search or analysis of stored/retained ALPR data is solely for investigative or public safety purposes.
3. The theoretically abuses outlined above would only be possible if this agency operated a network of multiple mobile and fixed ALPR systems, and it is unlikely that this agency will ever operate ALPR systems in that manner. However, as a further safeguard to citizen privacy, ALPR data will routinely destroyed after a one year period. The system administrator will ensure the system is operated in this manner. Any requests for ALPR data retention beyond the one year period must be approved by the Chief of Police.